Iku's Nervousness, Asako's Joy, and a Date-Not-Date in Kantō [Updated Version]

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by lefemmerouge

Summary

Iku and Asako have their first date-not-date. It is supposed to be a test run before each of them ask out the men they have crushes on. Particularly, Asako wants to help Iku so that she is prepared when she asks out her "prince," the man she likes. After leaving the Kantō library base, rain threatens to ruin the get-together. Even so, Asako and Iku continue to enjoy each other's company, whether traveling to a cafe which serves tea, a mall, the park, and many other places across the city...

Notes

Hey everyone! Happy May 8th! This fic **fulfills** the prompt by NightcoreAndCaffeine on a certain site: "QPR for any female two or more female characters (Fandoms are only a suggestion of what I like, choose anything you'd like :D!)" and continues where "A First Time for Everything?: Asako, Iko, and Their Affections" (the first part of this series and listed in inspirations) left off. This fic mainly focuses on the relationship/connection between Iku and Asako. While the men they like is mentioned, it is not a big part of the story.

This fic was originally published on AO3 and seriously under-performed, with only 26 hits, one kudo, and two comments (which cannot even be read, for some reason, even when logged into AO3), while garnering four views on Asianfanfiction, 12 reads on Quotev, seven reads on Wattpad, and 70 reads on here. Listed as inspirations were four fics: "Promoted" by Lexorisa, "Print on Demand" by Gramarye, "Zombie Wars" by AnimeShipper12 and notcompletelysane, and "Six clues" by Naco.

I further listed the LGBTQIA+ Wiki as having a good definition of QPR, saying such relationships often have characteristics that people usually associate with romantic relationships, such as "deep emotional intimacy, prioritization, and commitment" and noting that even though QPR typically involves those along the asexual and/or aromantic spectra, it can involve those of any romantic/sexual orientation or gender. That page also says that QPR partners sometimes call each other by the term

"zucchinis" rather than saying they are friends, as that downplays intimacy, or using the word "partners" as that suggests "a romantic or sexual relationship." This same page states that a squish refers to a platonic or aromantic crush and describes "non-romantic and non-sexual feelings of attraction...highlight[ing] that love and infatuation are not necessarily tied to romance or lust." Some of what I said in this paragraph was adapted into the fic itself.

This has been changed from the original, which was 1,901 words to a word count of 2,156 words, an expansion of about 13.4%. I expanded it by adding more throughout, making it stronger, in late March, the today, adding a total of 255 words in all, to get it to the present word count. I also changed the summary slightly as well. I had a lot of fun revising this work and would love to write more works for these two women (maybe they'd become a couple ultimately) in the future if I have time.

As I noted in my A/N for the original fic, I went back and forth on whether this should be Teen and Up or General Audiences and decided it would be the latter, after reading this discussion. If you think it should have been General Audiences instead, feel free to comment about here. This fic was also cross-posted on the Internet Archive.

As always, comments and constructive criticism are welcome.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by Iku's Nervousness, Asako's Joy, and a Date-Not-Date in Kantō by lefemmerouge
- Inspired by A First Time for Everything?: Asako, Iko, and Their Affections [Updated Version] by lefemmerouge

Iku was nervous. It was a weekend, so she didn't have work. She had wracked her brain deciding *what* she was going to wear. It didn't help that Asako was her roommate. This may have not been an issue *normally*. In this case it was because… she was going on a date-not-date *with her!* It had been an idea she had thrown out there after they finally decided to express their compassion, affection, respect, and platonic feelings for one another with cheek and forehead kisses. Smooches on the mouth, or anything intimate, had been *forbidden*. They'd even set ground rules. Pecks on the back of the hand were allowed, but neither one had done that. Even so, they enjoyed their casual kisses as friends.

Before they left their shared room, they kissed one another on their cheeks. This was something that they had started doing *every day* ever since Iku had first suggested it. To her surprise, Asako happily agreed. Iku had never expected that out of Asako, but she had no problem with doing this. As it continued, day after day, each one felt that these acts of sweet affection gave them the support and love for one another they *needed*. They showed how much they meant and cared for one another, and it strengthened their emotional bond. Perhaps there was more to it. They kept this all quiet. They were aware that any of their work colleagues found out, it could spell disaster for both of them.

They had a plan. First they'd go to a cafe, then the movies. After that, Iku would buy a gift for the man she liked, Atsushi Dojo. Iku would ask him out on a date and present the gift to him at the end. It was nothing more than a friendly outing. At least that's how they both saw it. Asako didn't mind acting blunt, making sarcastic jokes, or sharing her true feelings around Iku. She didn't have to hide any of this from her because Iku was a flawed woman herself. She could trust her, more than *anyone*. She liked having that connection. She was glad that they had become closer and she wouldn't do any of it differently. She wanted to make their bond stronger. Perhaps, this date-not-date was one way to do it.

Some would call the emotional connection between them a "womance." That was a word that some people used to refer to a strong, deep, and meaningful non-sexual relationship between two or more women. Such a word would be accurate in their case. Iku and Asako had a tight-knit bond. They saw themselves as kindred spirits of sorts, appreciating each other, and acting chummy. Occasionally, they'd be physically and emotionally intimate, although never in a sexual way, at least not at this point and maybe never. As such, this was all new for both of them. Hugging and holding hands was fine, as was cheek kissing. Anything sexual was completely *out of bounds*. They didn't know the term and it wasn't really used within Japan. In contrast, others outside Japan some might have deemed their relationship "queerplatonic." In any case, their

close bond certainly involved a level of commitment from them both. It defied any societal morays or expectations, without a doubt.

Their friendly outing began without a hitch. No one paid them any mind, especially since other women on Kantō Library Base did the same. Asako was dazzling, with her white parasol. Iku looked more dower in more earthy colors. They soon made their way to a nearby cafe. They made it inside just in time. A torrent of rain poured down outside, something that the meteorologist, Martin Masseltoffer, who had recently moved to Japan from the U.S., had not predicted. He was a dapper man and smart, so it *annoyed them* that he had been wrong. Maybe one of those prediction models he had used gave him faulty results. They didn't know if that was the case or not, but they guessed it might be.

Iku sighed. They sat down at a small chabudai, as an attendant gave them a menu listing the tea served there. They both chose the amber, chamomile tea, since it was in the insignia of the Library Defense Force (LDF) after all. While the cafe, unsurprisingly, did not have books in open view. This was due to a lingering fear of a possible raid by the Media Betterment Committee. Even so, they had some newspapers available. Asako read the recent rag. It took a viewpoint they sadly expected: it openly praised the MBC and its recent efforts to "clean up" the streets of "filth." She knew full well that it was propaganda. Even so, these publications could be used to the LDF's advantage.

"What's wrong, Iku?" Asako asked. Her friend complained. "This weather is *dreadful*." The attendant came in only seconds later with their tea. He added something after overhearing their conversation. "Oh, it's like this every year. I've been here for 50 years and I'm almost used to it now." As he walked away, he added, "enjoy the tea. I'll be around if you need anything else." Iku and Asako smiled back at him. They both drank the beverages he had provided and savored the sweet taste. All the worries about their date-not-date being ruined were washed away. Iku put her cup down and observed the rain outside. Maybe it really was beautiful after all. Maybe she just had a bad impression of the weather.

"Don't worry," her friend began, "we can still do everything we planned on...don't forget, I have *this* umbrella." Her brown-haired friend, who looked elegant and refined, couldn't help but laugh. A parasol wasn't supposed to stop rain! It was supposed to protect tan skin from the bright sunlight. Right? The mascara and violet eye shadow emphasized her brownish black eyes, combined with lip gloss, with its dark tint shimmering on her lips. Her features were emphasized, bringing out her nature feminine nature. Unlike Iku, she wasn't a tomboy at heart. She never would be. Instead, she was *more* attractive, *more* beautiful, and *more* adorable than anything else. She wanted to do all she could to help Iku's budding romance with that man, Dojo, which she found sweet. She could *almost* swoon over it. She'd always thought they were right for one

another. Even so, she felt a connection to Iku that she didn't have with *anyone else*.

The rain seemed to let up. "Let's go!" she exclaimed, grabbing Iku, quickly pulling her up. It was so quick that she could barely pull herself together. Asako nearly threw money on the table, just enough to cover the full amount. Unlike some other parts of the world, the service charge was part of the bill. People didn't give tips. In fact, those who gave tips were looked down upon as committing a social evil. Iku had never seen Asako so happy. From what she had observed, Asako felt very reserved sometimes. She was very dedicated to her job. She really was cutting loose this time. She didn't have any secrets to hide. She couldn't act like this around other employees. That wasn't what she did.

They made their way into the shopping mall in the nick of time. The rain began pouring down once again, hitting the mall's clear glass roof. It had been designed to be open so it could let in light from the outside. As they went into a clothing store, they walked past winter clothing, like pairs of gloves, until they came across a set of scarves. One happened to be Dojo's favorite color. "I'll get this one for him!" Iku chirped. Asako smiled, not with an enigmatic expression but one of joy. She couldn't be happier for her friend. Perhaps she could have gotten him new combat boots or something else instead. Despite that, this seemed like a better gift for this season, as it was cold and rainy outside.

With another break in the rain, Iku and Asako made their way to one final place: the local park. Due to the weather, there were very few in attendance. If people had seen them together, they may have thought they were a couple. Such people couldn't be more wrong. While being paired together had not been a thought that either one of them would have thought of, originally, they were glad it had happened. Their friendship had strengthened over time. She felt *safe* with her, able to bring down her walls, and not hide who she was. Surely she flaunted her beauty and radiance all the time. With Iku, she could *almost* show off. She liked that. Could she do that with a man? She wasn't sure that she could.

Iku or Asako could go out *whenever* they wanted and with *whoever* they wanted. Each one had a man they had feelings for. For Asako, it was a man named Hikaru Tezuka. For Iku, it was Atsushi Dojo. They were both part of the LDF, like them. *Neither one* had begun dating the men they liked. Despite that, they certainly talked about their feelings for these men from time to time. Some called Asako an "enigma." That wasn't accurate. Instead, she was a smart woman who could hold her own. Some men didn't like that. Some men liked her because of her looks. She *hated* those kind of men. She saw them as disgusting trash. Despite that, she saw men who acted more respectful as fine and without issue.

The emotional connection between Iko and Asako was flexible and with clear boundaries. They'd never use terms like "zucchinis," used by some in relationships similar to what they had to refer to each other without using the word "friend" or the term "partner." The latter suggested a romantic or sexual element. There may have been some level of attraction, on a certain level. If so, it was non-romantic and non-sexual. There was the false idea that infatuation and love were tied to lust or romance. That was wrongheaded. The deep friendship of Iku and Asako went beyond the so-called "normal" or social acceptance for people would see platonic or romantic. It did not fit any traditional ideas in the slightest.

For Iku and Asako, their connection did not stop either one from beginning romantic relationships with men like Dojo or Tezuka. Their connection was monogamous rather than polyamorous. They had never even thought about the latter. Who else would they be with in such a relationship? Despite that, they had a desire to be together. Each one felt confident in their sexual or gender identities, although there was always the possibility that something could disrupt their understanding. Regardless, they clearly had a close emotional connection and did not mind breaking social norms. They only called each other friends, rather than life-partners or partners, to eschew *any possible* misunderstandings.

Some might have believed that their relationship indicated they were dating. If someone found out and said that to them, they'd surely laugh it off. They deeply, and mutually, supported one another. Despite that, there were no commitments to one another resembling shared finances or anything similar. On the other hand, they lived together. It was an open question as to *how much* freedom and independence they had as LDF members. Iku and Asako did not have an exclusive relationship, nor did they need to prioritize this over any possible romantic relationships. At the same time, they were open and vulnerable with one another in ways they weren't, and wouldn't be, with others.

Everyone experienced these kinds of relationships differently. Perhaps what they had was "non-typical" and not "normal." That did not bother Iku nor Asako. They wanted to keep it private. If it got out, it could mean that their male coworkers in the LDF could become jealous or they could be separated for their "safety." The worst possible scenario would have them reassigned to different divisions. Maybe they'd tell their possible romantic partners about this. They hadn't decided whether to do that yet. They didn't want any messiness. Neither one had gone as far to question relationship hierarchies. People elsewhere, in different situations, would likely do so, without having as many limits.

As they continued chattering away, Iku turned to her friend. "Do you want to go back?" Asako nodded. They walked back, laughing along the way, skipping through the puddles, and having a fun time together,

something neither one had expected would happen. It wasn't clear that this experience would actually prepare either one of them for dates with the men they loved. It probably wouldn't. That was okay. The experience both of them had on that wonderful day would certainly change each of their lives in ways that neither one could ever have expected. Ultimately, it would make them realize something about each other that altered how they saw one another going forward...

End Notes

In my original A/N, I noted fics like "A Brilliant Plan" and "Hikaru Tezuka's "type"" which are very well-constructed and executed, but not enough to be listed as inspirations, but saying that the fic was also somewhat inspired by the wording of the rules of the QPR subreddit. I also note that in my end note for "First Time for Everything?: Asako, Iko, and Their Affections," I said that Asako and Iko were not yet in a womance, referring to a close, but non-sexual and strong, relationship between women, with deep and meaningful connections, a tight-knit bond, appreciation, camaraderie, solidarity, female bonding, and possibly sisterhood, with two women seeing themselves as kindred spirits or soul sisters. I also said they were only beginning as queerplatonic, referring to emotional and physical intimacy between two or more individuals while they remain friends, and have outside romantic relationships, even if those involved consider themselves soulmates, which is not romantic and usually not sexual, with a stronger emotional bond than usually in friendship. With this date-not-date, their queerplatonic relationship (QPR) is moving forward leaps and bounds.

I further pointed out that QPR partners, otherwise known as QPP, can call themselves zucchinis, "marshmallow," or "mallowfriend." Others use the term "squish" (i.e. a platonic crush), or terms like called plush, squash, or crish, although the latter isn't as common. This comes from another wiki site, also called the LGBTQIA+ Wiki (not on fandom.com), which goes onto say that some call QPR a "quirky relationship" or "qplatonic relationship." That wiki calls QPR an "intimate, non-romantic committed relationship" going against cultural norms which dictate, in many modern Western societies, that "romantic partners are more physically affectionate and more emotionally close than friends are." It can either look like a close friendship or resemble a romantic relationship, including "hand-holding, cuddling, kissing, or having sex." Some QPR couples can even be married queerplatonically.

In my original version of fic, posted on November 10th of last year, I noted that I was publishing the fic at the start of Kindness Week, which encourages everyone to make a "declaration of kindness and charity," including by donating "books, food, or clothes to local communities and pledging to empathize with other people," saying that the case of this fic, it is all about kindness between Iku and Asako, as they come together on this date-not-date. I also note that the fic falls under saffic fics, which "focus on the relationships between women," including "gen stories that focus on other strong female bonds such as friendship, sister, rival and mother-daughter relationships." In the fic, Asako refers to Asako Shibasaki. The fic fulfilled the Flufftober 2025 "Make it Platonic!" challenge, particularly the "Alt 6. First Date" prompt. I also said the fic

was fluffy without a doubt, and said that I enjoyed writing this and bringing Iku and Asako together. I said that the beauty of the fic is that I could talk about romantic relationships almost in the abstract, without directly showing them, saying it was kind of like what Sailor Moon does when the Sailor Scouts talk together about crushes, but the people they are crushing on aren't always shown.

This fic originally posted on Sunset, a femslash fanfic site. However, it was removed when I was sadly perma-banned on April 17th for mishandling interactions with a few users, despite apologizing to those users, removing certain passages of fics, and apologizing to the Sunset admin (and others). As such, I would strongly recommend **against** *anyone* joining that site, or Superlove. Both admins (Melo/Kat for Superlove, Agnes for Sunset) are friends with each other. Those admins are very particular and not in a good way. I find the whole circumstance deeply unfortunate. I wish it could have been resolved a much better way.

I did not want this fic to be lost. I have not included some tags on there (like Sunset's Femslash Refresh 2026, Exclusive to Sunset, Prompt Fill, Other (Male) Characters Are Mentioned, and Queer Community) but others have been retained. On Sunset it was listed as part of two series: "The Softness of Intimacy: Asako, Iko, and Romantic Friendship" and "My Femslash Refresh 2026 Collection."

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!